

Parole News

Massachusetts Parole Board

December 2007/January 2008



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New Board Member is Welcomed



Pictured from left to right are the members of the MA Parole Board: Mark Conrad, Tom Merigan, Candice Kochin, Leticia Munoz, Chairman Maureen Walsh, Doris Dottridge and Pam Lombardini

This month, the Massachusetts Parole Board welcomed Dr. Leticia Munoz as the newest Board Member. Dr. Munoz, originally from Texas, is a licensed clinical psychologist with an expertise in community mental health services. During her internship at McLean Hospital in Belmont, Dr. Munoz provided cognitive behavioral therapy to a broad range of patients. She has extensive professional experience specializing in services to urban, low-income patients. Prior to joining the Board, Dr. Munoz was the Clinical Director at Brightside School Street Counseling Institute in Springfield.

Dr. Munoz sees her upcoming work with the Parole Board as a natural extension of previous experience. Her clinical work with victims and clients impacted by violence means the parole population is familiar. Her hope is to utilize this familiar understanding and perspective when hearing cases.

Dr. Munoz anticipates that her expertise will assist the Board in identifying instances where treatment and support services can prevent future criminal behavior.

Welcome Dr. Munoz!

Bringing a Taste of Newbury Street to St. Francis House

By Nelson Simao

Although Newbury Street and Boylston Street is less than a mile apart, Christina Froudaki can't help but feel that her last job on Newbury Street is worlds away from her current job as the Studio Shine Coordinator at the St. Francis House on Boylston Street, "The clients I help here are much nicer, less snobby" says Christina. Although her statement may not surprise some locals, the profile of her new clients may, since the Studio Shine boutique is run by the only full time image consultant in the country working with parolees and also the homeless.



Pictured above is Christina Froudaki at Studio Shine

Christina heard about Studio Shine from Kelly, a former co-worker around the time she had been laid off from an upscale boutique. Kelly needed some help at the studio and asked Christina to come work with her, however some of the job details were sketchy Christina recalls, "I remember she had me meet her at the CVS across the street from St. Francis and that is where she told me about her clients. I was freaked out at first and said what is this, where are the limos? But once I saw the studio I instantly loved it, I could feel the spirit."

Studio Shine is the brainchild of a Moving Ahead Program (MAP) alumnus. MAP is a fourteen week class offered at St. Francis that gives its clients life skills training with the goal of gaining full time employment. The connection between employment and clothing lies in first impressions and that is what Christina and the MAP instructors emphasize beginning the first week of class. The students do an exercise where they write down their first impressions of their fellow classmates based on clothing, facial expressions, etc. This feedback is then returned anonymously to each student several weeks later so they can begin making improvements in nonverbal communication workshops led by Christina, who stresses the importance of professionalism. Around this time,

students begin making appointments for internships and job interviews. In preparation, Christina consults with the students and coaches them how to wear clothes that accentuates his or her natural beauty and body shape. Then every student is carefully measured for fit, provided with all the pieces of a professional wardrobe, and even given two haircut vouchers. Once working, the students receive at least five professional dry-cleaned wardrobe changes for the work week. Most of the

clothing in Studio Shine is donated by everyday people but several Boston area retailers have supplied new clothing.

On Friday December 21st, the stores and boutiques of Boston are busy with Christmas shoppers but on the 4th floor of the St. Francis House where Studio Shine is located, Christina is busy putting the finishing touches on several students who will graduate the MAP class that afternoon in a formal ceremony that was photographed and catered by two former MAP clients. You can see the pride she has in helping transform her client's appearance and professionalism from the day they walked through the St. Francis door fourteen weeks earlier to today, which is also Christina's birthday.

Many of the graduates take time out of their speech and publicly thank Christina for making them look like a million dollars but she remains humble and instead thanks them, "I am grateful to them for letting me give them my opinions on their appearance and help them find a look they are comfortable with. At my previous job, I very rarely gave my honest opinion but instead had to agree with a person who was going to spend a lot of money"

For more information on how to donate clothing to Studio Shine, please visit www.stfrancishouse.org

Chairman's Column

Parole Board Chairman Maureen Walsh



At different times during my column for the newsletters, I have been able to discuss upcoming events or issues that are facing the Agency and to speak about the challenges and victories of the Agency.

This month, my column is taking a different tack—as I wanted to

speak with you about the strength of our agency and the importance of volunteerism as an employee of the state.

As an administrative head of an agency, there are many ways in which you could evaluate the strength of the agency. Typical ways to measure strength is to look at budgets and the dollar amount provided in a line item, how many employees are employed by the agency, or the places in which expansion has occurred. However, when I look at the strength of this agency as a whole, and its ability to conduct the difficult task assigned to it, I keep coming back to one common denominator: the incredible strength and character of the people who work for the agency. While I am sure that there are many employees of many agencies who believe that their department or their agency is the “best,” I personally believe that it is the

individuals who work at the Parole Board who continue to make Parole an essential partner in the efforts to create safe communities.

One of the ways that I believe truly reflects the strength of an agency is to look at the volunteerism and charitable acts of the Agency. Understanding that all of us have very busy personal and professional lives, I am impressed by the amount of individuals that volunteer time to charities. The Governor, recognizing the importance of employees in the Executive Branch to give back to the community, has created the “SERV” program, which stands for “State Employees Responding as Volunteers” program. This program allows for employees, with their supervisor’s approval, to volunteer up to one

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All ROADS Lead to Wellness

Newly released offenders often tell the Parole Board that what they really need when they get out of prison is a friend committed to staying sober, employed and on the road to living a productive life. Substance Abuse Coordinator from Region 9 Framingham, Steve Bisson, an employee of Advocates, responded.

Steve, along with colleague Yvette Kovner, a Counselor also of Advocates, started a group called ROADS – Reentry Opportunities for the Advancement and Development of Skills, a weekly evening support group for formerly incarcerated individuals looking for support as they reintegrate in the community. As a licensed mental health counselor, Steve has created a curriculum for guided topics that integrate substance abuse relapse prevention with other topics relevant to the population.

“ROADS is helping offenders rebuild their lives, develop new skills and achieve the rewards and satisfactions of a responsible lifestyle” said Dana White, Assistant Parole Supervisor in the Framingham Parole office.

While housing and employment remain critical priorities of the reentry teams around the Commonwealth, it is the supportive environment of a group like ROADS that smoothes the bumpy road back to the community.

Domestic Violence Training For Field Parole Officers



Pictured is Dr. David Adams, Executive Director of Emerge

The Field Parole Officers are currently being trained on an updated version of the Domestic Violence Policy and Procedure. This policy has not been revised since 1993 and did not adequately address regional changes since the inception of the Reentry initiative and the inclusion of Victim Services Coordinators in the field. The new standard operating procedures integrate the new responsibilities and foster a team approach to dealing with domestic violence.

The all day trainings consisted of

opening remarks by Chairman Maureen Walsh and Don Giancioppo. Acting director of the Victim Services Unit Janice Dean provided Domestic Violence 101 and reviewed 209A law and restraining order procedures. The agency was fortunate enough to have Dr. David Adams, Executive Director of Emerge, a batterer's treatment program, to provide the Field Parole Officers with profiles of killers who murder their intimate partners. The training concluded with Acting Chief George Valentgas reviewing the proposed Domestic Violence Policy and Procedures.

Employer Breakfast Series to Begin in April

By Chris Foster

On April 4th, 2008 the Parole Board is planning the next in a series of Employer Breakfasts to be hosted at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Worcester. This event welcomes employers from the private sector who are willing to take a chance hiring ex-offenders. Some of these employers are members of our Employer Advisory Board. These members are our core group of employers who are loyally committed to our mission in supporting employment opportunities for ex-offenders. These members have made recommendations to us on how to make our process run more smoothly.

We will be adopting two of the Employer Advisory Board's recommendations at our breakfast in the spring. The first will be a new articulation agreement between the employer and the contributing state entities including the Parole Board. The agreement does not hold the business to anything more than the guarantee of a fair chance for ex-offenders throughout the hiring process. The agreement maintains that the Parole Board and the Division of Career services will provide job applicants who have completed adequate job training at a Massachusetts

One Stop Career Center and have a referral from their Parole Officer. We are proud to say, so far, the articulation agreements have been a great success in assisting us to build relationships with employers. We find that companies are willing to maintain an ongoing relationship with the Parole Board that ultimately creates more jobs opportunities.

After a description and presentation of the agreements at the Worcester breakfast we are hoping to have new companies sign on, thus resulting in more employment opportunities for ex-offenders in that region.

Additionally, members of the Advisory Board are developing a video that will showcase current participating employers. The video will contain answers to legal questions that employers have regarding hiring ex-offenders. Working with the Parole Board to answer these questions are criminal justice professionals throughout the Commonwealth who are experts in their individual fields.

These innovative strategies added to the agenda will assist in making the Worcester Employer breakfast as much of a success as previous events.



Community Health Center Provides Health Education and Harm Reduction to Parolees

Last year, the Parole Board was approached by Dimock, a community health center, about supporting a 5 year SAMSHA grant application aimed at providing health education and harm reduction services to patients in the greater Boston neighborhoods surrounding the Parole Region 2 Mattapan office. Dimock was awarded the grant and after an intense planning period, spearheaded by Elizabeth Sanchez (a very successful former parolee highlighted in this newsletter a few months ago) the RREACH program opened. More than half the graduates are active parolees.

*"It is great to witness
a patient's growth.
They are doing what
they need to do to stay
healthy"*

Elizabeth Sanchez

RREACH, (risk reduction, education, adherence & counseling for health) is part of Dimock's Adult Medicine department and is an intervention curriculum centered on a 10 week program designed to address medical and behavioral issues relevant to preventing HIV, Hepatitis C and related substance abuse. RREACH also has a goal of formalizing linkages between patients and the array of primary care health services available at Dimock including medical and mental health services.

Elizabeth reports: "Its great to witness the patient's growth. They are doing what they need to do to stay healthy".

While the Parole office in the community near Dimock has always enjoyed a positive working relationship, it was at the Veterans Benefits Clearinghouse 'Operation Standown' in the summer of 2006 that a new connection was forged. Parole Reentry Officers staffing a tent near the medical tent networked with public health nurses from Dimock and recognized a cross-over in the population served and a need for more coordinated services. Dimock and Reentry staff worked together to create a fast-track for medical triage offered to newly released parolees at Dimock and in exchange, parole staff participated in preliminary meetings regarding the SAMSHA application.

The partnership has been fruitful. One parolee, we'll call him Sam, reported he was "shocked" by some of the information he learned in the course. "If you have a history of bad behavior, when you look at it, you say to yourself 'Man, I was reckless.' RREACH gave him a chance for serious self reflection, for the opportunity to make good choices and to prioritize his own health. As a result of his participation in this program, he is now receiving full primary and preventative care services.

Chairman's Column

Parole Board Chairman Maureen Walsh

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day per month at a variety of non-profit organizations in the Commonwealth. For example, Kira Dunn volunteers at the Greater Boston Food Bank, while Michelle Goldman volunteers as a tutor for the Boys and Girls Club. Janice Dean and Valerie Vernon are volunteering at the American Red Cross Blood Drive and Patty Malone is volunteering as a chaperrone in the schools. If you are unable or concerned about the time commitment, SERV has plenty of one time opportunities for volunteering. I would encourage you to consider volunteering and more information about SERV is located on the state website.

Parole employees also do other acts of charity for individuals and organizations that are in need of help. Marcia Hill, Deputy Chief of the Transitional Services Unit organized a food drive at the Holidays. Jeff Stone of the Field Services Unit did an outstanding job in increasing the number of people who donate to COMECC, the statewide Commonwealth of Massachusetts Employees Charitable Campaign. The results were outstanding as Jeff set the bar high, and then exceeded the donations given by our Agency.

There are singular events of kindness that occur as well. Debbie Griggs, who rightfully won the best decorated office at the holiday party, donated half of her winnings to the American Cancer

Society, and, as a result of Patty Malone, Don Lafratta, and the Union donation, we delivered a check of over \$350 to a scholarship known at the Peyton Tuthill Foundation, which provides assistance to siblings and children who have been left behind by homicide. The Board Members have been an integral part of this effort on each and every occasion.

These are just a few examples of the strength and spirit of the Massachusetts Parole Board and why I believe that we are all very fortunate to work for this agency. Thank-you for all that you do, both while and work and on your "free" time to improve the community!



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